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19 September 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : Inspection of the Office of National Estimates
and the Estimative Process

1. The objectives of the ONE inspection were (a) to determine the views of the intelligence community on the quality and usefulness of national intelligence estimates, and (b) to appraise the efficiency of the estimative process and the Office of National Estimates.

2. The inspection team was not qualified to weigh substantive conflicts revealed during USIB drafting and coordination of specific estimates. Many ONE participants in estimating cited examples of apparent deficiencies in estimating as, for example, foreseeing the impact of the Communist Chinese agricultural crisis, or assessing the operational capabilities of the Royal Laotian Army. However, the inspection team heard no proposals for modification of the existing authority and structure of the estimative system. The inspectors concluded that a national intelligence estimate undergoes as widespread, continuous and intense an evaluation as any other document produced in the intelligence community.

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3. National estimates are receiving careful consideration by the top planning and policy-making officers of the U.S. Government. This is shown in the attached memoranda covering discussions with Mr. Walt W. Rostow, Counsellor and Chief, Policy Planning Council, Department of State, and Mr. William P. Bundy, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. Equivalent testimony was obtained from spokesmen in the offices of General Maxwell D. Taylor, Military Advisor to the President, and Mr. McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

4. These sources were consistent in their praise of the current estimative product dealing with the Soviet Union-- particularly that on military subjects--and with alternative courses of action in various contingency situations. Less interest was expressed in the scheduled estimates on specific countries, but there was general agreement that these estimates had improved in usefulness by evolution from their earlier encyclopedic approach toward better focussed analyses of key issues.

5. The inspectors' principal findings are summarized in the following paragraphs. In general, this survey proposes measures which in our opinion would tend to increase the flexibility of ONE and USIB management within existing patterns of operation.

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6. The performances of the individual members of the Board of National Estimates vary in quality depending on the experience of the individual in intelligence analysis and writing and on his aptitude for the estimating process. This fact in no way discounts the quality of his previous accomplishments in other fields. The survey recommends that there be a continuing effort to upgrade the quality of Board member performance by establishing a time limit to the initial assignment of new members. Similarly as members of outstanding talent acquire seniority, attention must be given to sabbatical assignments.

The Estimates Staff

7. The Estimates Staff of ONE has yet to determine whether the talented drafter of estimates should work on a career basis. The prevailing attitude of the staff is to reject reassignment in the DD/I area unless this involves clear advancement. The DD/I is now moving to promote a freer flow of senior personnel among his offices. This survey recommends measures in support of ONE career planning.

The Princeton Panel of Consultants

8. The use of a panel of outside specialists meeting frequently at Princeton University to provide an additional check on the adequacy of estimates was an obvious need and safeguard

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2 during the early years of the present estimative process. With the growing professionalism of the ONE performance, review of estimates by a panel of outside consultants has lost its vitality in the virtually unanimous opinion of the ONE Estimates Staff. The DAD/NE, however, continues to see utility in the panel sessions both as a check for fresh views and to promote a healthy relationship between the intelligence and academic communities. The present survey recommends that the needs of the Estimates Staff be governing in this area. The present panel approach to consulting should be discontinued as a regular practice in favor of more individual contacts with a greater variety of cleared specialists of agreed interest to Estimates Staff personnel.

ONE Contact with Policy Makers

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9. There is too little contact at present between ONE personnel and Government policy planners. This stems in large part from a long-standing doctrine of separation of intelligence producers and users. The inspectors concluded that the professionalism of present day estimators insures against the risk of partisan involvements. The estimators need more guidance from policy makers on the context of estimating problems. The survey recommends regular face-to-face discussions at the start of each estimative effort between ONE representatives and senior

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policy-making personnel. Notes from these discussions should be included in the terms of reference for each estimate.

USIB Contribution to the Estimative Process

10. The USIB organizations contributing to estimating were frequently described in CIA as a loose confederation in which each participant decides what resources he can commit to the estimating effort. Present contributions are widely uneven in quality, and some participants are not substantively qualified. The inspectors have proposed that the USIB undertake periodic assessments of the performance and program commitments of the participating agencies and recommend standards of staffing and levels of research effort.


11. Specialized USIB committees, such as the Scientific Intelligence Committee, have explicit responsibilities in their DCID charters for contributing to national estimates. The coordinating and publishing procedures employed by the Scientific Intelligence Committee are not consistent with those of the Board of National Estimates. The inspectors have recommended that the Assistant to the DCI for Coordination be charged with investigating through the USIB and recommending action to meet this problem.

12. The inspectors suggest that the senior command of CIA stimulate reaction to the estimates by direct dissemination to

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appropriate consumers, e.g., an Assistant Secretary for African Affairs at the Department of State in the case of an estimate on an African subject. Such dissemination should be accompanied by correspondence requesting comment on leading issues.

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J. S. Earman
Inspector General

Attachments